Libraries Without Walls:
The World Within Your Reach

A Vision for Public Libraries in British Columbia

BRITISH COLUMBIA
www.gov.bc.ca

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Public Library Services Branch
October 2004

Message from the Premier

Our libraries are a great investment in community, learning and literacy. They open doors of opportunity for minds hungry for knowledge and adventure. They are the front lines of the effort to make British Columbia the most literate place in the world.

Every year, thousands of librarians, volunteers and library boards work to give their communities even greater access to the future's most important resource: knowledge.

I want to thank everyone who has worked on creating Libraries Without Walls: The World Within Your Reach *for their time, expertise and effort—especially library trustees, librarians, municipal leaders, and the UBCM task force.*

Under this plan, we are increasing funding for libraries. Starting in 2005/2006, over three years, an additional $12 million dollars will be invested to help put this plan in place. It will provide broadband in every community library, increase access to online journals and establish a provincewide One Card system and virtual reference desk to anyone anywhere in British Columbia.

This plan reflects our shared commitment to create communities open to new ideas, where learning and personal development are at the heart of all our endeavours.

Sincerely,

Premier Gordon Campbell

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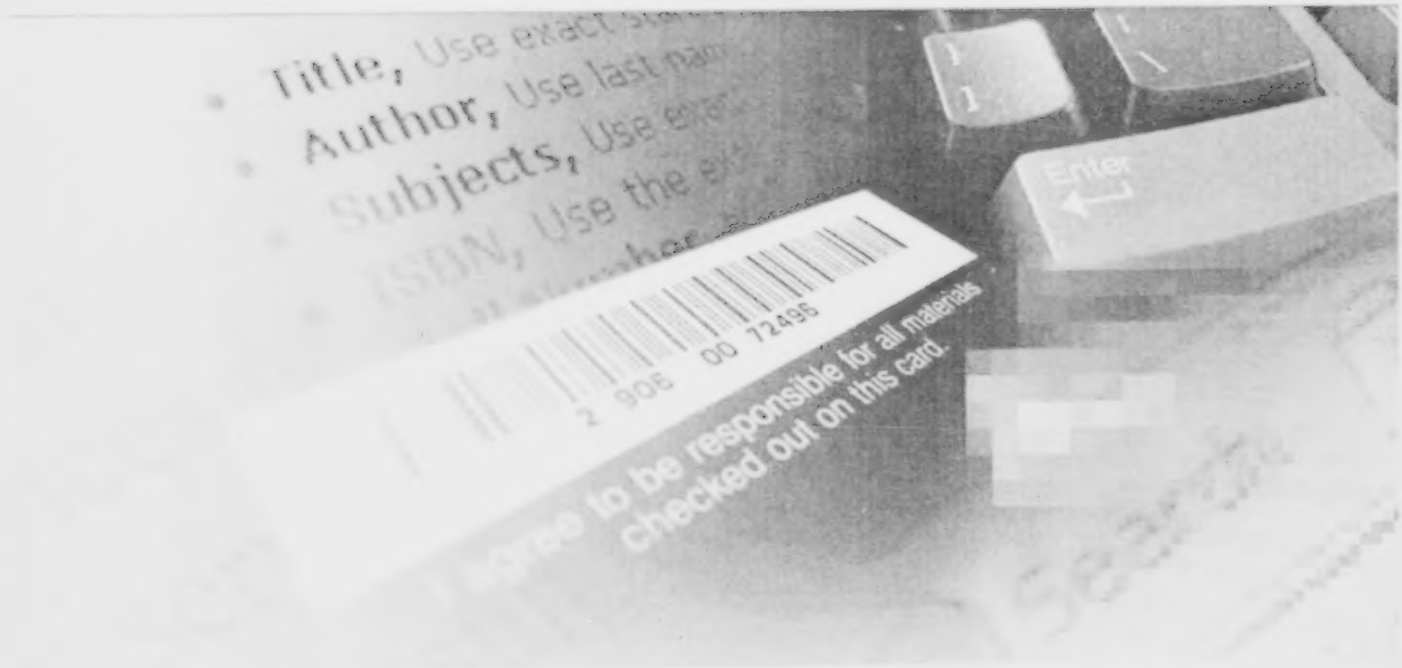

Executive Summary

The role of public libraries has become significant in the emerging information age through new technologies like the Internet. Public libraries play a key role in managing information services to ensure citizens get high quality information in an orderly way that is relevant and useful. By providing equitable access to information, they will continue to contribute to British Columbia's economic strength and social vitality.

Recognizing that public libraries have a rapidly expanding role in providing this essential information, the Premier requested that the *Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services* (MCAWS) deliver a strategic plan for public library services throughout British Columbia. The *Public Library Services Branch* (PLSB) engaged in extensive consultations with library professionals, library boards, local government representatives and the *Union of British Columbia Municipalities* (UBCM). This paper is the result of those consultations.

Through consultations with members of the library community, the PLSB has developed a practical vision for public libraries that provides equitable access to information to all British Columbians and makes effective use of provincial public library resources. This strategy addresses increasing public expectations about how to access information, as well as rewarding collaboration within a climate of limited resources. It will support libraries by enhancing services. It will ensure that libraries remain at the forefront of information delivery within their communities by:

- supporting equitable access to information through Internet technologies;
- encouraging further collaboration among libraries;
- promoting partnerships between libraries and the education system, the private sector and all levels of government to improve service delivery;
- initiating governance reform to modernize the legislative framework to allow more flexible service delivery for local communities.

This vision for public libraries will:

1 ***Facilitate equitable access to information for all British Columbians through:***

- broadband technology that connects all libraries to high-speed Internet;
- an information gateway for seamless, one-stop access to electronic information;
- a One Card system that simplifies access to library services for all British Columbians;
- province-wide electronic access to licensed basic information such as educational, skills-related and health resources;
- virtual reference services that ensure every citizen has access to the best quality information available;
- training for library staff so they can guide British Columbians to find the information they need;
- a library marketing campaign to promote services and capabilities to ensure British Columbians have access to the full potential of resources available.

2 ***Encourage collaboration and partnerships to improve service delivery cost-effectively through:***

- establishing library federations to maximize collaboration among libraries and improve the efficiency of resource use;
- improving public libraries' ability to provide government information;
- multi-type library partnerships between public libraries, K-12 school libraries, and post-secondary libraries to share resources and services and to make efficient use of public funds;
- partnerships with private corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- partnerships with other federal and provincial jurisdictions to share information and resources;
- including library needs in negotiations, such as the federal New Deal for Cities and Communities, to improve libraries' access to capital funding.

3 ***Initiate governance reform through:***

- a modernized legislative and governance framework to strengthen libraries and provide them with greater flexibility in service delivery;
- performance measurements that show the direct impacts of library services on the lives of British Columbians.

This comprehensive suite of strategic options will combine to provide public libraries with the support they need as an important community resource of the information age.

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Section 1

Context

Introduction

Public libraries are important public institutions in British Columbia because they offer highly regarded information services that the public trust. Since 1891, public libraries have provided access to information thereby expanding the knowledge and enhancing leisure time of British Columbia's citizens. Public libraries provide their users with the collections, services and support they need to find, evaluate and use the information needed to pursue interests and achieve goals. Not only are public libraries the primary source of reliable information resources, services and programs in the community, they also serve as a vital focal point of community life by:

- promoting literacy and an enjoyment of reading;
- encouraging a love of life-long learning;
- supporting democratic values through free access to information for everyone;
- providing resources and programs that enhance the lives of children and families;
- supporting the local and provincial economy by providing information on jobs, skills and markets;
- supporting local culture and leisure by partnering with arts and recreation organizations;
- reflecting the personalities of their communities through local culture and heritage collections;
- serving as community meeting places;
- offering an array of services including those for children and seniors, job-seekers and retirees, new Canadians and individuals with special needs.

Public libraries remain unique among public institutions because of their commitment to free access, their focus on community, their permanence, their high level of public acceptance and because individuals can participate voluntarily in the services they provide.

The role of public libraries becomes even more significant in the information age. With advances in technology like the Internet, many British Columbians are overwhelmed by the amount and variety of information available to them. Public libraries offer quality, accurate information that is easily accessible. Libraries replace information anarchy with order, capitalizing on the advantages offered by new technologies while applying traditional skills. Libraries not only make access to information more equitable, they manage resources to ensure that citizens get quality information in an orderly, relevant and useful manner.

Public libraries are eager to participate in the information age and are well-positioned to do so. They have led the way in adopting and adapting new technologies. In the past 25 years, they have computerized cataloguing, streamlined checkout procedures, provided electronic delivery of information, and facilitated public access to the Internet.

The Rising Demand for Information

Statistics confirm British Columbia's growing demand for information. Fully 98% of British Columbians are now served by public libraries. Across British Columbia, there are 235 public library branches operating under the governance of 70 library boards. Together, these libraries circulated more than 50 million items in 2003. For a provincial population of about 4.1 million in 2003, that works out to 12.3 items per person. Public libraries in British Columbia currently hold about 11.1 million print items, adding roughly 800,000 items each year.

About 55% of British Columbians have active library cards and are using them to borrow materials on a regular basis. The steady rise of library use, rising more rapidly than British Columbia's strong population gains, clearly demonstrates the growing public thirst for information.

Public Library Use in BC

To meet this rising demand, libraries are adding new staff and are open longer hours than ever before. Altogether, library branches were open to the public for more than 462,350 hours in 2003 and staffed by 2,023 full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees, 443 of them professional librarians. In 1993, for comparison, public libraries were open over 409,000 hours and employed 1,708 FTEs including 365 professional librarians.

Cross-Jurisdictional Comparisons

It is difficult to compare public library services across Canada because each provincial and territorial jurisdiction organizes public libraries differently. Some jurisdictions operate public libraries centrally or at arms length with costs for running library services paid directly by the province or territory. Others, like British Columbia, delegate library services to the local government level with the province paying a portion of the costs. As a result, comparisons of dollar support for public library services must take both provincial/territorial and local/regional government funding into account.

In 2003, the Province contributed 6.4% of the budget for public libraries' operating costs; local governments contributed 84.7% and the remaining operating budget came from other grants and revenues. When comparing financial support from all sources, British Columbia's public libraries, with total annual revenues of $153.6 million in 2003, are at the mid-point of the cross-jurisdictional scale, slightly below the national average. Looking only at support from local/regional levels of government, British Columbia ranks in the top quartile nationally. Comparing support from provincial/territorial governments only, British Columbia is in the bottom quartile.

The Strategic Context

Libraries have a community impact far beyond the direct lending and information access services they provide, from early learning and literacy, to cultural inclusion, to increasing job skills and contributing to British Columbia's economic vitality. The provincial library strategy is consistent with many ongoing and broad government initiatives, including:

- strategies to promote consistent service levels for education, health and social services;
- Premier's Technology Council and NetWork BC initiative to bridge the digital divide by providing broadband access to communities in British Columbia;
- AchieveBC initiatives to support lifelong learning;
- Literacy Now's work to improve family literacy, life-skills and workforce skills;
- MCAWS Aboriginal Directorate's Provincial Aboriginal Social-Economic Strategy;
- Healthy BC's initiatives to support access to health information;
- the 2010 Winter Olympics that will be a platform to showcase British Columbia to the world.

The Framework for Public Libraries in British Columbia

Public libraries in British Columbia share a common mandate under the *Library Act* to make public library collections accessible on-site and borrowing free of charge to all residents/electors of the library's service area. Under the *Library Act*, there are four types of public libraries: municipal libraries, regional library districts, public library associations and integrated public library systems. The *Act* also provides for a model of collaboration among library jurisdictions through federations.

The Public Library Services Branch of the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services oversees the legislative and governance framework for public libraries. It sustains public libraries by providing them with leadership, advice, training, funding and programs. For example, the PLSB provides per capita operating and resource-sharing grants; provides program support in the area of interlibrary lending, virtual reference (Virtual Reference Desk) and staff training (Community Library Training Program); and administrative and financial support for programs like Writers in Libraries and the province-wide Summer Reading Club for children. The Branch assists libraries in implementing new technologies, facilitates development of shared services and builds partnerships with local government, the private sector and community groups. The PLSB also ensures that libraries comply with the *Library Act* and other provincial legislation and serves as a liaison between libraries and provincial/federal ministries and agencies.

Principles

The proposed directions for public libraries have been guided by the following principles:

- Access to core library services and information will be free to all British Columbians;
- 100% of British Columbians should have equitable access to information;
- Collaboration, coordinated service delivery and partnerships play an essential role in high quality service delivery and cost effectiveness;
- Extensive consultations between the PLSB and the staff and boards of public libraries will precede the implementation of all strategic initiatives;
- Local government and provincial funding will remain the primary sources of library funding but additional funding opportunities will be actively pursued;
- Funding for library services should have a measurable impact on service delivery;
- Library boards should remain autonomous;
- No library will be forced to amalgamate with any other;
- Public libraries may adopt initiatives of the strategic plan voluntarily.

Friendly staff check out books at Cranbrook Public Library.

Section 2 *Strategies*

The strategic directions form a practical, integrated vision that supports all public libraries in their efforts to take advantage of information age opportunities. The plan recognizes that many British Columbians want to access information through their library in new ways. These expectations require libraries to adapt so that they remain at the forefront of information delivery within their communities. Responding to these needs, the proposed library strategy describes a vision for public libraries that will:

- support equitable access to information by capitalizing on Internet technologies;
- ensure libraries are able to overcome technical barriers to access;
- build on collaboration among libraries, the education system, the private sector and all levels of government to improve service delivery;
- initiate governance reform and modernize the legislative framework.

This vision builds on the strengths of public libraries in British Columbia. By enhancing what libraries are already doing well, this vision positions them to be more responsive to the challenges and opportunities of the information age. It does not represent a drastic policy shift, rather it reflects a slight shift in strategic emphasis. This vision concentrates on building public libraries' capacity to participate fully in the information age and to aggregate their resources through collaboration. The PLSB would continue to do what librarians and libraries have come to expect: offer leadership, support and assistance so that libraries can provide the best public service possible.

The components of the vision will be substantially realized within a three to five year development cycle. Individual initiatives build on work already begun by the PLSB and by public libraries or on directions already contemplated by the community. Some initiatives can be set in place almost immediately, while others will require further discussion and negotiation with libraries and service partners. Completion of projects such as achieving library broadband connectivity is dependent on achievement of network infrastructure priorities by NetWork BC and private telecoms. A full status evaluation and review of the strategic plan is contemplated at the end of three years.

Strategic Direction 1: Facilitate Equitable Access to Information

The vision for public libraries in British Columbia is one that extends access to information available through physical and electronic library resources to 100% of the population. Universal access is only a beginning, however. It lays out potential initiatives that make access to information more equitable, particularly for people living in rural areas so that they have more opportunities to participate fully in economic activities and improve the health and stability of their communities. This comprehensive vision will:

- extend Broadband Access;
- establish an Information Gateway;
- implement a One Card Library System;
- provide Electronic Access to Basic Information;
- extend Virtual Reference Services;
- train Library Staff to Use Electronic Resources;
- market and Promote Library Services.

Together, the elements of this vision support the ongoing efforts of public libraries to provide access to information across British Columbia. They take advantage of new opportunities offered by technology and address many of the barriers to access that exist in rural communities.

Extend Broadband Access

The vision for public libraries will make access to basic information available to 100% of British Columbians. Access to high-speed Internet using broadband is the indispensable backbone of strategic initiatives like electronic access to basic information, the One Card system and virtual reference services, described below.

Through this strategy, all British Columbians will have equitable access to electronic information via high-speed Internet when broadband is available in public libraries province-wide. As citizens in remote communities have an enhanced ability to improve their job skills and become lifelong learners through e-learning, British Columbians will have more opportunities for entrepreneurship, e-marketing and home-based businesses. Public libraries will be able to offer new electronic services that improve access to information and share resources and expertise to effectively expand their services into new areas.

Implementing this concept will require working with NetWork BC and its partners in the private sector to ensure that unconnected libraries have top priority when schedules for delivering broadband infrastructure are developed. It will also require exploring avenues to reduce broadband costs to libraries.

Establish an Information Gateway

The vision for public libraries will see the creation of a library gateway as a single point of entry to current, high-quality information. The gateway will be accessible to all British Columbians and provide easy-to-find and easy-to-use access to:

- all provincially-licensed basic electronic information sources, such as full text magazine articles and documents;
- the library catalogues of all participating libraries;
- the extra resources provided by the user's home library;
- links to other information portals like BCcampus and BCEd Online.

The gateway will provide all British Columbians with the convenience of a single starting point for around-the-clock information access, allowing them to search many library resources as if they were found in a single information source. As well, the gateway will automatically identify a user's library membership and determine the information resources available to that person. It will enhance current library services and support small libraries by increasing access to available information.

Before starting an information gateway, work must be done to build on the existing union catalogue and harmonize standards and protocols. Once this technical work has been done and the site developed, the information gateway will be available to any library member in British Columbia who has access to the Internet.

Implement a One Card Library System

Introducing One Card access to library collections is a central part of the vision for public libraries. Used like a passport to information, a single card will give all British Columbians free, equitable and seamless access to library holdings 24 hours a day, seven days a week from any computer in the world connected to the Internet. One Card allows British Columbians to borrow physical items from libraries outside of their municipal or regional boundaries and to search all library catalogues for resources.

When integrated with the electronic gateway and Internet access, One Card will provide access to the basic information available online province-wide. The One Card concept requires coordination among public libraries. As well, because it depends on equitable broadband access and facilitates other concepts like virtual reference services, it should be managed in conjunction with other electronic initiatives.

Provide Electronic Access to Basic Information

All British Columbians will have access to a suite of licensed electronic information databases purchased by the province on their behalf. The basic information provided to everyone will include:

- general knowledge required up to and including first-year university;
- information on business, technology, and consumer health;
- children's materials;
- an authoritative encyclopaedia;
- information specifically relevant to British Columbians.

When implemented along with the One Card system, this information will be available both within the libraries themselves but also beyond library walls. The availability of basic information will be adapted to changing public priorities. As well, individual libraries can augment the province-wide electronic holdings with additional databases exclusively available to their own patrons.

For public libraries, this initiative will:

- remove the financial and administrative burden of purchasing core databases and free library funds to meet other priorities;
- reduce pressures on physical space by requiring less shelving space for print resources.

The first step towards making this idea possible will be for librarians and library representatives to determine the breadth and scope of the basic information they need. The information gateway will also provide a single point of entry into the system.

Extend Internet-Based Reference Services

Making 'virtual' reference services available to all British Columbians through the proposed information gateway is an integral part of the proposed vision for public libraries. These virtual reference services will allow library users to ask questions and get library assistance any time and from anywhere they have Internet access.

Virtual reference services will benefit library users by providing convenient, timely access to the entire province-wide array of reference resources, beyond the restrictions of library buildings and opening hours. This initiative will be particularly beneficial to small libraries because the service would augment their limited reference resources and enhance the services their staff can provide. Virtual reference services will also improve librarians' capacity to answer questions by allowing reference requests to be forwarded to other libraries with access to specialized reference materials.

The implementation of virtual reference services depends on the delivery of broadband access, the information gateway and the One Card system. The Vancouver Public Library will lead the rest of the community as they collectively define the scope of the services to be made available.

Train Library Staff to Use Electronic Resources

New training resources will be developed so that library staff across British Columbia will develop the expertise they need to use electronic resources and to guide members of the public as they navigate through them. This training will be made available province-wide to make sure that staff who are working in small libraries in rural communities have similar levels of skill as staff in urban centres.

Making this concept a reality will enhance the services offered by public libraries. Staff will be better equipped to find electronic information for the public and to teach users how to find the information for themselves. By addressing requests of library staff for more training, the initiative would support staff aspirations to upgrade their skills and make it easier for libraries to hire and retain skilled personnel.

Training modules developed under this initiative will be offered on an ongoing basis through regional workshops, teleconferences or computer conferences (web casts). The courses will also be delivered using videoconferencing once all public libraries are connected to the Internet using broadband.

Market and Promote Library Services

Raising the profile of public libraries and increasing public awareness of the many resources and services offered by libraries and their staff is a strategic direction that supports the vision for public libraries. In the short term, implementing this concept will promote the:

- visibility of libraries and the services they offer to their local communities;
- modernization and revitalization of public libraries through user-friendly technology;
- existing and new service capacities and information offered by libraries;
- reference and other skills of librarians;
- libraries as vital centres of community information and community-building.

In the longer term, as electronic technologies are developed, the promotion campaigns will build on general library advertising to highlight specific initiatives such as:

- One Card and electronic access to basic information;
- availability of specific new services, such as virtual reference services;
- province-wide coordination of technology to relieve pressures on libraries.

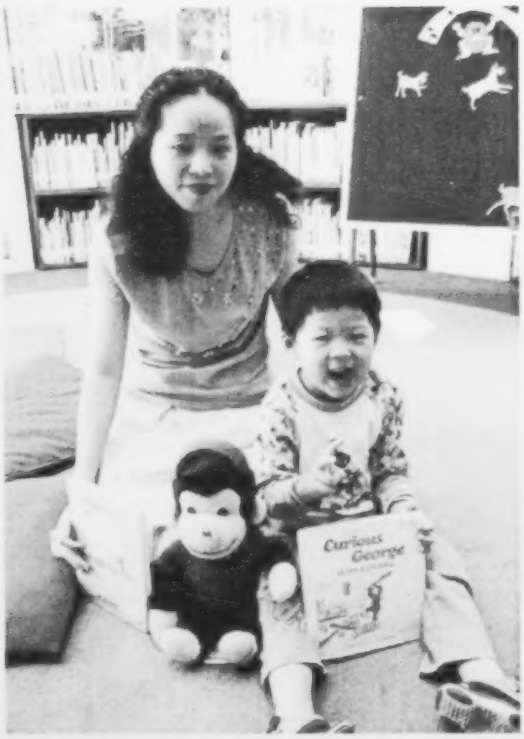
A promotional campaign will provide the public with a better idea of the services and resources available and how they can make better use of them. Province-wide library promotion will have greater impact and increased leverage than the marketing efforts of individual libraries.

To ensure that British Columbians continue to be aware of the resources available to them, this strategic direction envisions a modest, ongoing marketing campaign using all popular media. A communications strategy, a baseline to measure the strategy's success and a branding campaign will be essential components necessary to implement this idea. Opportunities to find partnership funding to share the costs of marketing the capacities of libraries and online resources will also be explored.

Strategic Direction 2: Collaboration and Partnerships

Collaboration and cooperation between organizations accomplishes results far beyond those that can be achieved by any single organization. Recognizing this, the vision for public libraries includes a strategic direction that focuses on collaboration and partnerships. Within this framework, the library community will pursue mutually beneficial partnerships with provincial government ministries and agencies, libraries, institutions, other jurisdictions, private agencies and non-governmental organizations. These collaborative partnerships could:

- improve access to information for all British Columbians;
- enhance library services cost-effectively;
- provide new Internet content, such as e-learning and e-training tools;
- maximize the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery by sharing resources, delivery, administration, technology, staffing and/or costs.



A preschooler discovers an old friend at [illegible] Public Library

Encourage Library Federations

The vision for public libraries includes building on the long history of local library cooperation by supporting the development of new library federations that will encourage independent libraries to collaborate on shared issues for their mutual benefit. Voluntary federations[1] will allow public libraries to pool and coordinate their resources, enhancing their ability to deliver sustainable services. Such collaborations will strengthen local libraries and serve as an effective way to aggregate high quality public library services currently beyond the capacity of local libraries alone. For example, library federations have the potential to increase the service capacity and cost-effectiveness of individual libraries by sharing:

- collections;
- programming;
- the cost of acquisitions;
- technology administration;
- cataloguing tasks;
- reference requests;
- administrative and management tasks;
- training.

Library federations could improve public access to information while generating economies of scale that reduce the costs of administration and collections acquisition. This collaborative culture, coupled with the opportunities presented by new technologies, will create a natural climate for new collaborative ventures that address problems common to many small rural libraries. Library federations will be established whenever individual libraries agree among each other to coordinate their efforts.

[1] The PLSB has no intention to amalgamate libraries; it is looking solely to support collaborations sought by public libraries themselves.

Enhance Public Libraries' Ability to Provide Government Information

Recognizing that libraries are an important bridge between citizens and information, libraries will be provided with better tools to provide government information. Within this vision, governments — not just individual citizens — discover that libraries are the place-to-go for information. This vision is achieved by:

- working with provincial government ministries (Health Services, Children and Family Development, Skills Development and Labour, Small Business and Economic Development, etc) that directly serve the public to make them aware that libraries could be effective partners in providing program information to the public;
- working with libraries to ensure they have the government information the public wants;
- making librarians' tasks easier by liaising between government and libraries to ensure librarians have the training necessary to provide the public with advice relating to government information;
- supporting government branches to make electronic government resources like e-journals available to libraries without subscription fees to improve access and free library resources for other priorities;
- exploring opportunities to provide kiosk or common-desk government services within libraries;
- aggregating services libraries provide individually, such as electronic homework tutors, so that they are available equitably and promoted across British Columbia.

Through partnerships between the provincial government and public libraries, the general public will have easier and streamlined access to government information. This concept will require considerable dialogue between the PLSB, libraries, and government agencies to develop a relationship and a mutual understanding of the services libraries provide, and could provide, to government.

There's something for the whole family at Greater Victoria Public Library

Happy patron enjoys the library's young adult section at Greater Victoria Public Library

Support Partnerships between Multi-type Libraries

Within a vision that supports greater collaboration, the public library strategy would encourage more partnerships among all types of libraries. Natural partners in the continuum of learning, public libraries and libraries in K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions will work together to determine mutually beneficial opportunities for sharing resources, training and technologies.

The following list represents a few of the areas being considered for mutually beneficial partnerships:

- partner with Literacy Now and its partners to expand access to resources and provide e-learning opportunities;

- work with AchieveBC to develop electronic and in-library resources that support all levels of lifelong learning;
- cooperate with post-secondary institutions to support the development of BCcampus, an electronic gateway offering students access to distance learning courses, resources and support services;
- provide access to content with BCEd Online, a school district initiative that is improving electronic educational content;
- work with the British Columbia Electronic Library Network (ELN), a partnership between the province and post-secondary libraries;
- explore a partnership with the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre at the University of British Columbia to coordinate training modules and e-courses.

To make this idea possible, there needs to be a dialogue between public libraries and educational institutions to determine the level of interest in partnerships for mutual benefit. Most likely, early partnerships will focus on e-learning and e-training, as well as on sharing technologies and databases.

Explore Partnerships with Private Sector and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

There is some potential for partnerships with private corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that could provide libraries with new sources of funds and free or reduced-cost access to resources like computer terminals and databases. Corporations with connections to literacy, publishing, electronic information, and services the public associates with reading and information could be approached to enter into partnerships. A few of these partnerships have already been implemented on an ad hoc basis. For example, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have supplied many public libraries in British Columbia with computer packages. Within the strategy, it is possible to investigate channelling private, tax-deductible donations from corporations, individuals or charities into library foundations to increase library access to alternative sources of funding.

Explore Partnerships with Other Jurisdictions

Partnerships will be explored with other governments including the governments of other provinces, the federal government and maybe even other countries. Such partnerships may provide opportunities for cooperative purchasing and programming with other provinces to gain cost savings and other efficiencies. At a minimum, mutually beneficial information-sharing partnerships could be formed by various jurisdictions as they strive to keep abreast of the best information and technologies to fulfill the potential offered by the information age. The provinces might also enter partnerships to advocate for federal resources that would enhance access to information and lifelong learning resources.

Other types of partnerships will include working with the federal government and First Nations' communities to make sure that Aboriginal people living on 1,600 reserves scattered across British Columbia have access to public library services. Areas of exploration will be broadband connectivity, availability of electronic resources and providing technology training to Aboriginal people.

Working with other jurisdictions will help to aggregate public library resources and improve access to information beyond what can be provided at a provincial level without such partnerships. These kinds of inclusive initiatives will help to overcome jurisdictional issues and ensure that 100% of British Columbians have equitable access to information.

Young reader "checks out" the library in a new way

Include Library Priorities in Negotiations

Public libraries could be a priority in negotiations with the federal government, including:

- the New Deal for Cities and Communities;
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's youth and employment insurance training programs and infrastructure priorities;
- Federal Government programs relating to Internet connectivity and public access;
- Canadian Heritage programs, including digital content creation, copyright and library book rate postal subsidies.

As a provincial infrastructure priority, libraries could receive more federal and matching funds to support capital projects, such as new buildings, expansions, renovations and broadband access. Setting these new funding priorities should have the concrete result of allowing libraries to improve their infrastructure. Long-needed projects or postponed projects may be able to begin sooner.

Making this concept work will require discussions between local governments and library boards to determine their infrastructure needs and learn their priorities.

Strategic Direction 3: Governance Reform

The vision for public libraries in British Columbia includes initiating legislative reform to address changes that have occurred since the *Library Act* was revised in 1994. Technological advancements are accelerating the pace and demand for information exchange beyond anything anticipated in the current *Act*. As well, the framework for local governance and service delivery has shifted from being prescriptive to being permissive, a change not reflected in the *Act*. Economic challenges and limited resources mean that libraries are looking for new ways to deliver services more efficiently. Within this context, it seems wise to review the *Library Act* to determine whether it can be modernized to reflect these changes and give libraries more autonomy and flexibility to deliver high quality library services. As well, new ways of measuring performance can both improve library services and demonstrate the important contributions libraries make to their communities.

Libraries provide materials in many formats.

Review Legislation

Under the governance reform strategic direction, the vision for public libraries includes a review of the *Library Act (RSBC 1996: Chapter 264)* that governs all public libraries in British Columbia. The *Library Act* will be reviewed to reflect:

- the expanding services libraries provide as the public demand for more, instantly accessible and higher quality information grows;
- opportunities presented by new technologies, such as high-speed Internet, to deliver new and different services faster and without physical barriers;
- the enabling and empowering spirit of the *Community Charter* governing local government;
- new openness to collaborative service delivery tools that meet local needs;
- opportunities for cost-saving and funding alternatives within a climate of limited fiscal resources;
- recent provincial initiatives towards plain language legislation.

Broad priorities will include issues surrounding governance models and structural issues, interlibrary cooperation, collaborative and service delivery opportunities provided by new technologies, and revenue alternatives. The strategy envisions a process that will:

- reaffirm fundamental values of the *Act*, such as the commitment to free access to core services;
- elaborate on or change existing provisions to make them clearer, more enabling and less prescriptive;
- give libraries the flexibility they need to adapt to opportunities presented by new technologies, and support new ways of collaborating, forming partnerships and generating revenue.

Extensive consultations with libraries, municipalities, regional districts and other library stakeholders will need to be held with a view to determine the priorities for legislative change.

Create Meaningful Performance Measurement Indicators

New performance measures will be used to indicate the social and economic contribution libraries make to their communities. Libraries serve citizens by strengthening lifelong learning, supporting early childhood development, and enhancing economic diversification, but they have uneven methods of demonstrating this conclusively. Statistics collected to date quantify library performance but provide less data about outcomes. Using outcome-based performance measures that show the community impacts of library services, libraries will be able to demonstrate their essential importance to community life. For example, they may show how literacy levels, healthy lifestyles, incomes or job skill levels improve because of the availability of library services. This concept will not tie performance measurements to funding.

Collected systematically and comprehensively, performance measures will help public libraries demonstrate the value they are providing for the funds they receive. Qualitative performance measures will be designed through a consultative process including representatives from public libraries to make sure the measures are relevant to library needs. As well, current statistical measures will be fine-tuned so they become more useful to libraries as a performance measure.

Concluding Remarks

The vision for public libraries outlined in this paper presents practical strategies that improve public access to information, foster partnerships that aggregate library services and provide a framework for greater autonomy in service delivery. As a result, all British Columbians will have access to the information they need and public libraries will improve the quality, reach and cost-effectiveness of their services. It is a vision ready for the potential of the information age.

Section 3 *The Consultation Process*

Story-time is a moment at Terrace Public Library

Recognizing that public libraries are critical to the economic strength and social vitality of communities, the Premier requested that a comprehensive strategic plan for public library services throughout British Columbia be developed. He charged the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services with the responsibility for its delivery by Spring 2005. The Minister assigned this responsibility to the Public Library Services Branch.

When charged to develop British Columbia's library strategy, the PLSB made consultations with librarians, library boards, municipal representatives and other interest groups its top priority. As a first step, the PLSB formed a Library Issues and Opportunities Committee (LIOC) in March 2003. This committee, a cross section of ten chief librarians, guided the consultation process and served as an invaluable source of information on issues affecting public libraries in British Columbia. Committee members were also helpful in providing feedback on potential strategic initiatives as they emerged through the course of consultations. To ensure that stakeholders were able to participate fully in the consultation process, the PLSB hired The Zethof Consulting Group Inc. to coordinate workshops, meetings with individuals, phone interviews and mail and electronic surveys. This company also reported on the results of these consultations.

Consultations began in May 2003 by identifying key challenges and opportunities facing public libraries in a *Situation Assessment* document based on selected interviews with public library stakeholders. Using this paper as a springboard for consultations, the PLSB invited library stakeholders to submit comments on this paper either in writing or electronically through the PLSB's web site. This paper also served as the basis of a strategic planning workshop held at the joint BC Library Association/BC Library Trustees Association Conference at Harrison Hot Springs on May 31, 2003, that included library trustees, managers and staff. PLSB staff also visited many public libraries across British Columbia to solicit comments and information.

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities established a Library Task Force to participate in the consultation process. The Task Force conducted a member survey about library issues during the summer of 2003, presented the findings at a clinic at the UBCM Convention in September, and submitted its report and recommendations to the PLSB in November. The British Columbia Library Trustees Association (BCLTA) surveyed library boards in the fall of 2003 and submitted its findings and recommendations to the PLSB in November.

By the end of 2003, the PLSB received ideas and feedback from more than 200 people through interviews, written submissions and the BCLA/BCLTA and UBCM workshops. Many more people participated indirectly through the UBCM and BCLTA surveys. The PLSB summarized these responses in its *Report on Consultation Process for a Strategic Plan for the British Columbia Public Library System*, submitted in December 2003.

Throughout this process, the PLSB consulted with hundreds of people in all aspects of the library community and with many representatives from the UBCM over a six month period. These consultations were used to test strategic ideas

with key library stakeholders and to develop and refine a suite of options that address the priorities of public libraries across British Columbia. These extensive consultations are the basis for the vision outlined in this document.

The Background Environment

The consultations established that public libraries in British Columbia face some major challenges, including:

- increasing demand for quality information;
- rising public expectations for seamless, comprehensive and conveniently accessible information;
- demographic changes, including growing and increasingly diverse urban populations and declining rural populations;
- escalating library costs for collections, operations and infrastructure that make it more difficult for libraries to deliver services in a period of limited resources.

Greater Victoria Public Library provides homework help to local teens.

Response to Consultations

The PLSB developed its vision for public libraries as a suite of strategic options in response to feedback from consultations with the library community. The section below summarizes key comments from library stakeholders and links these to specific concepts proposed as part of the vision for public libraries. The complete vision will be described in greater detail in text that follows this section.

Access

Library stakeholders remain adamant that access to core library services should remain free.

Direction:
Maintain the policy that all core services are free.

Respondents universally view technology as the key to improving public access to information. They strongly support the idea of a seamless, single library card system that would allow province-wide access to information and advocated that libraries be better provided with the technical capabilities to access high-speed Internet. Librarians express an eagerness to take advantage of new technologies to improve access to information resources, including

Direction:
Use Internet technology to facilitate improved access and equitable access to information, by:

- Extending broadband to all public libraries in British Columbia;
- Establishing an information gateway;
- Implementing a One Card system;
- Extending Internet-based reference services;

electronic reference and catalogue searching capabilities. The library community recommends investing in technology to get the most value out of limited financial resources.

- Providing electronic access to a suite of basic databases and electronic resources on behalf of all public libraries in British Columbia to gain economies of scale and eliminate duplicated staff costs at a local level.

Collaboration

The library community is aware of the inequities in resource access, funding and staffing between libraries in remote, rural areas of the province and those in larger urban centres. They suggest that many of these inequities could be reduced through collaborative partnerships that could augment purchasing power and cost-effectiveness by sharing collections, bulk buying, enhancing reciprocal borrowing, and sharing resources.

Direction:
Facilitate library federations to support collaboration between libraries so they can work together for mutual benefit and improved service delivery. Support partnerships between multi-type libraries.

The library community knows that libraries are often the place citizens go to for access to government information and forms, particularly because librarians are often able to provide value-added services.

Direction:
Position public libraries as one of the government information outlets that provide a bridge between citizens and government information. Coordinate the investigation of potential partnerships between public libraries and provincial ministries and agencies.

Respondents display enthusiasm for renewing the natural bond between libraries and literacy promotion. Others mention the possibility of enhancing collaboration on pre-school and after-school programming, skills training and life-long learning.

Direction:
Facilitate partnerships with non-governmental agencies and the private sector to enhance the availability of resources.

Funding

The library community, faced with rising costs and tight budgets, is looking for more financial resources.

Direction:
Investigate funding partnerships with the private sector. Update the

from more sources. At the same time, public libraries are looking for initiatives that will improve the cost-effectiveness of service delivery.

Library Act so that it gives libraries more ways to receive funding. Deliver coordinated programs, such as the province-wide purchase of electronic resources. Include library infrastructure funding as a topic in infrastructure negotiations with the federal government.

Some small rural libraries have difficulty finding and retaining qualified staff. They may only be able to afford part-time staff and may only be able to attract individuals with a para-professional skill set.

Direction:
Extend the training opportunities provided to improve the skill sets of all library staff.

Legislation and Performance Measurement

Respondents want library legislation that preserves the autonomy of public libraries with enabling powers. They want core services to be better defined, greater flexibility in service delivery, a clarified relationship between the board and the library, and new options for raising funds.

Direction:
Review the *Library Act* to make sure it meets the needs of public libraries in British Columbia.

Libraries are looking for effective ways to evaluate the impact they have on the communities they serve.

Direction:
Develop performance measures that show how library services make a difference in local communities.

Community Awareness

Respondents believe that the public are unaware of the wide range of materials and services available to them and fail to make full use of librarians' skills.

Direction:
Launch an ongoing marketing and promotional campaign to increase public awareness of the services libraries offer and the importance of libraries to community vitality.

List of Organizations and Individuals Who Consulted with the Public Library Services Branch

Contact Organization	*Contact Name*	*Contact Position*	*Input Method*		
PUBLIC LIBRARIES					
1. The Alberta Library	Punch Jackson	Director	√		
2. Burnaby Public Library	Paul Whitney	Chief Librarian, Library Issues and Opportunities Committee (LIOC)	√		
3. Cariboo Regional District Library	Colleen Swift	Chief Librarian (Director of Libraries)	√		
4. Cariboo Regional District Library	Mary Sjorstrom	Regional District Director	√		
5. Castlegar & District Public Library	Joanne Richards	Trustee			√
6. Chetwynd Public Library	Fay Asleson	Chief Librarian		√	
7. Coquitlam Public Library	Karen Harrison	Chief Librarian (Library Director)	√		√
8. Cranbrook Public Library	Pat Adams	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
9. Creston Public Library	Gina Rawson	Chief Librarian			√
10. Fort Nelson Public Library	Nola Newman	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
11. Fort St. John Public Library	Marsha Triebner	Director			√
12. Fraser Valley Regional Library	Jean Dirksen	Chief Librarian (Chief Administrative Officer), LIOC	√		√
13. Fraser Valley Regional Library	Sharon Gaetz	Chair	√	√	
14. Gibsons & District Public Library	Robert Curry	Trustee			√
15. Greater Victoria Public Library	Sandra Anderson	Chief Librarian (Chief Executive Officer), LIOC	√		
16. Greater Victoria Public Library	John Barton	Chair	√		
17. Greater Victoria Public Library	Patrick Murphy	Library Board Committee Chair	√		
18. Hazelton District Public Library	Eve Hope	Chief Librarian	√		
19. Houston Public Library	Janet Marren	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
20. Hudson's Hope Public Library	Karen Anderson	Librarian			√
21. Hudson's Hope Public Library	Mariann Field-Hill	Chair			√
22. Lillooet Area Public Library	Sheila Pfeifer	Chief Librarian	√		
23. Lillooet Area Public Library	June Melhuish	Chair	√		
24. McBride Public Library	Larry Stam	Chair			√
25. Midway Public Library	Wendy Olinger	Chief Librarian	√		
26. Mission District Public Library (FVRL)	Dennis Clark	Director of Corporate Administration		√	
27. Nelson Municipal Library	Deb Thomas	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
28. New Westminster Public Library	Ron Clancy	Chief Librarian	√	√	
29. New Westminster Public Library	Neda Murray	Librarian		√	
30. North Vancouver City Library	Jane Watkins	Chief Librarian	√	√	
31. North Vancouver District Public Library	Noreen Ballantyne	Chief Librarian	√		
32. North Vancouver District Public Library	Sally Gibson	Trustee	√		
33. North Vancouver District Public Library	Maureen Black	Chair			√

Contact Organization	Contact Name	Contact Position	Input Method		
			Interview	Mail	Internet
34. Okanagan Regional Library	Lesley Dieno	Chief Librarian (Executive Director), LIOC	√		
35. Pemberton & District Public Library	Julie Kelly	Chair		√	
36. Port Moody Public Library	Diana Gunn	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
37. Prince Coupe Library	Anonymous				√
38. Prince George Public Library	Edel Toner-Rogala	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
39. Prince George Public Library	Dave Sherwood	Chair	√		
40. Prince Rupert Public Library	Allan Wilson	Chief Librarian			√
41. Public Library InterLINK	Rita Avigdor	Manager of Operations			√
42. Public Library InterLINK	Stephen Lisik	Chair		√	
43. Richmond Public Library	Greg Buss	Chief Librarian	√		
44. Rossland Public Library	Mitchell Bickmore	Chair			√
45. Salt Spring Public Library	Board		√		
46. Sechelt Public Library	Iris Loewen	Chief Librarian	√		
47. Sechelt Public Library	Gary Foxall	Chair	√		
48. Sparwood Public Library	John Bertosa	Librarian			√
49. Squamish Public Library	Muff Hackett	Chair		√	√
50. Surrey Public Library	Beth Barlow	Chief Librarian	√		
51. Surrey Public Library	Mike Reddington	Trustee	√		
52. Surrey Public Library	Alex Dantzer	Chair		√	
53. Terrace Public Library	Ed Carell	Chief Librarian, LIOC	√		
54. Thompson-Nicola Regional District Library System	Kevin Kierans	Chief Librarian (Director of Libraries)	√		
55. Trail Public Library	Joy Huebert	Chief Librarian (Director)			√
56. Vancouver Island Regional Library	Penny Grant	Chief Librarian (Executive Director)	√	√	
57. Vancouver Island Regional Library	Peter Wainwright	Trustee	√		
58. Vancouver Island Regional Library	Tom Krall	Chair		√	
59. Vancouver Island Regional Library	Susan Yates	Librarian			√
60. Vancouver Public Library	Eric Smith	Acting Chief Librarian (Acting Library Director)	√		
61. Vancouver Public Library	Joan Andersen	Chair	√	√	
62. Vancouver Public Library	Brian Campbell	Director, Information Technology	√		
63. Vancouver Public Library	Gerry Collver	Director, Strategic Planning and Change, LIOC	√		
64. Vancouver Public Library	Ross Bliss				√
65. Whistler Public Library	Joan Richoz	Chief Librarian (Library Director)	√		
66. Whistler Public Library	Marlene Baldwin	Vice-Chair		√	

Contact Organization	Contact Name	Contact Position	Input Method		
			Interview	Mail	Internet
LOCAL GOVERNMENT					
67. City of Chilliwack	Clint Hames	Mayor		√	
68. District of Mission	Dennis Clark	Director of Corporate Administration		√	
69. Union of BC Municipalities	Ron Cannan	Library Task Force (Councillor, Okanagan)	√	√	
70. Union of BC Municipalities	Brenda Binnie	Library Task Force (Councillor, Castlegar)	√	√	
71. Union of BC Municipalities	Ted Armstrong	Chair Library Task Force (Quesnel)	√	√	
72. Union of BC Municipalities	Errin Armstrong	Policy Research Officer	√	√	
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT					
73. Chief Information Office	Floyd Mailhot	Executive Director	√		
74.	Barbara Greeniaus	(former) Director, Public Library Services Branch	√		
75. Ministry of Education	Rick Withers	Manager, Resource Standards Branch	√		
76. Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise	Maria Fuccenecco	Analyst, Telecommunications	√		
77. Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise	Galen Greer	Senior Analyst, Telecommunications	√		
78. Ministry of Management Services	Grant Thompson	Executive Director, Service Delivery Project	√		
79. Ministry of Management Services	Bette-Jo Hughes	Director, Government Agents Branch	√		
80. Ministry of Management Services	Mark McKinnon		√		
SCHOOLS & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS					
81. Curriculum Resource Center - Nelson	Wendy West	District Librarian	√		
82. Curriculum Resource Center - Nelson	Carol Westmacott	Librarian, L.V. Rogers High School	√		
83. Literacy BC	Linda Mitchell	Executive Director	√		
84. Sir James Douglas Elementary School	Jenne Martin	Teacher	√		
85. University of British Columbia – Irving K. Barber Learning Centre	Catherine Quinlan	University Librarian	√		
86. University of British Columbia – School of Library, Archival and Information Studies	Ann Curry	Associate Professor		√	
OTHERS					
87. AccessBC	Lee Ann Johnson				√
88. ASM Advanced Strategic Management Consultants	Stan Skrzeszewski	President	√		
89. Association of BC Book Publishers	Margaret Reynolds	Executive Director	√		
90. BC Government Employees Union	George Heyman	President		√	
91. British Columbia Chamber of Commerce	Mike Boehm	Director at Large	√		

	Contact Organization	Contact Name	Contact Position	Input Method		
				Interview	Mail	Internet
92.	British Columbia Library Association	Gene Joseph	Library Consultant, First Nations Interest Group	√		√
93.	British Columbia Library Association	Nancy Hannum	Chair, First Nations Interest Group			√
94.	British Columbia Library Association	Barbara Buxton	Chair, Multilingual Services Committee			√
95.	British Columbia Library Trustees Association	Sally Gibson	Director		√	
96.	British Columbia Library Trustees Association	Lawrence Lavender	Director	√		
97.	Canadian School Library Association	Karin Paul	President	√		
98.	Canadian Union of Public Employees	Mark Hancock	Acting President		√	
99.	Electronic Library Network	Anita Cocchia	Manager	√		
100.	Friends of Summerland Library Society	John Mott	Member			√
101.	Haycock & Associates	Ken Haycock	President	√		
102.	National Library	Roch Carrier	Chief Librarian	√		
103.	Vernon Women's Center	Debra Critchley	Community Action Coordinator			√

PRIVATE CITIZENS

104.	David Mallory					√
105.	C. Skyers					√

WORKSHOPS/INFORMATION SESSIONS

Association/Organization	*Year*
InterLINK Board of Directors	2003
UBCM Convention	2003
West Kootenay Library Association	2003
North Central Libraries Association	2003
UBCM Library Task Force	2003
Okanagan Mainline Municipal Association	2004
Lower Mainland Municipal Association	2004
North Central Municipal Association	2004

For further information please contact the Public Library Services Branch at:

Email: ***plsb@gems5.gov.bc.ca***
Phone: ***250.356.1791***
Toll free (B.C. only): ***800.663.2165***

Or visit the Public Library Services Branch website at:
www.mcaws.gov.bc.ca/lgd/public_libraries/

BRITISH COLUMBIA

www.gov.bc.ca

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